

# Music's relevance for pediatric cancer patients

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Full Title: Music's relevance for pediatric cancer patients: a constructivist and mosaic research approach

**PURPOSE:** Music is important in most children's lives. To advance efficacious pediatric supportive care, it is necessary to understand young cancer patients' thoughts about music. Concern about inviting unwell children to express opinions has resulted in scant research examining their views. "Mosaic" research examines children's experiences through investigating multiple perspectives which inform a "co-constructed meaning." This study examines pediatric cancer patients' and their parents' perspectives about music and music therapy's role in the children's lives. **MATERIALS AND METHODS:** Children were receiving care at three hospitals with the Paediatric Integrative Cancer Service in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. A constructivist research approach with grounded theory design was applied. Children up to 14 years old with cancer and parents participated. Data included transcripts from semi-structured research interviews and observations of children's music behaviors. Qualitative inter-rater reliability was integrated. Findings were compared with music therapists' perspectives examined elsewhere. **RESULTS:** Interviews were conducted with 26 patients, median age 5.7 years, and 28 parents. Data "saturation" was achieved. A substantive grounded theory emerged: Children's adverse cancer experiences are often alleviated by music usages. Broader family, social, and electronic musical interactions also promote children's resilience and "normal" development. Music therapy and associated programs often, but not always, alleviate children's distress. Positive effects may carry over into children's home lives and vicariously support families. **CONCLUSIONS:** Health professionals should consider ways to assist parents who are often using music to support children with cancer. Hospitals can promote pediatric cancer patients' resilience by providing music-based support services, including music therapy, and reducing unwanted stressful sounds.

Support Care Cancer. 2010 Apr 28. O'Callaghan C, Baron A, Barry P, Dun B. Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Melbourne, Australia, [clare.ocallaghan@petermac.org](mailto:clare.ocallaghan@petermac.org).

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